

810313 Esther HLH PAS AUD BS

I will start with the less serious matter and proceed. The Auditorium PM Congregation is rescheduling its monthly coffee clutch to be held tomorrow, which is the 14th of March from 1 to 2 p.m. before Sabbath services. I have before me here the Hebrew calendar for this present century. As I flip to 1981, I notice that the 20th or next Friday happens to be the 14th day of Adar. There is a book in the Bible describing the background of that event since next Friday falls after that. I thought it would be appropriate, since this was the occasion, that I was assigned for us to go over again at an interesting period in time, just about one month before the Passover season, to discuss one of those most critical periods in the history of the Jews, those people who have preserved the Hebrew Bible and made it possible for the Messiah to come in the flesh in the days of Herod, because the story behind this festival that we call Purim, which occurs on the 14th of the month Adar, or the second Adar should there be an extra month, is the story of the book of Esther. Esther's setting, of course, is in connection with such books as Daniel and Ezra and Nehemiah. You get the general feeling. I have before me here the English translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, and from time to time I might like to turn to read that, which I most often have read when we have gone through the material. In this case, however, I should like to do something just a bit different. There are different translations, and one that might be of some help to you is the one on the book of Esther in the Anker Bible Series, A-N-C-H-O-R.

The Anker Bible Series is published by Doubleday & Company, and each basic book, or with the Psalms, there's more than one book, is done by a separate author. This introduction translation in notes is by Carrie A. Moore, M-W-O-R-E. I'm not recommending the series as such. I wouldn't use some of the series, but this particular one is very interesting, and I was impressed with the way it is presented. We are dealing here with a book in the Bible. We're dealing here with a custom established in the book for the House of Judah that preserved this book. We are dealing with a matter here that is very similar to the way perhaps our church members, our brethren in England, might deal with the question of thanksgiving in the United States. We have never asked the rest of the members of the Church of God to involve themselves in adopting a custom that in America we call the day of thanksgiving. There are probably two reasons. One, we have no authority to do so, and two, they don't have quite as much to be thankful for in a physical way in many countries, especially when you know how they live. With respect to financial poverty, the lack of food available at the kind of costs that we have here, no nation has ever eaten so much so cheaply as we can and eat so well as we could. Notice the change of the verb in the United States.

We gave some eggs from our chickens to someone who was not normally aware of chickens that live on a farm, and when they were prepared for this man, he wondered what had happened because they did not look like the sick eggs he was used to. So we do have reasons to be thankful, and the Jews have reasons to be very, very thankful. We perhaps in thanksgiving for the physical blessings we have, the Jews for even their life, where if God had not intervened according to the book of Esther, there would be no house of Judah. There would not have been anyone born of either the tribe of Judah or the family of David. There would have been no Old Testament scriptures preserved. So what we should do is take a little look at this book in the short period of time we have and take some thoughts. I'm going to do it a little differently. I will try to pose some of the problems that people have raised. We're not going to go through the book verse by verse this evening, but take it from the distance as time permits and discuss certain parts of it and give you a background in a setting. The Anchor Bible series is a kind of Bible translation in very modern format done by some of the best

minds dealing with linguistics and a commentary with an introduction and notes. Now I don't normally recommend commentaries in reading the Bible. I used to use them before I came to Ambassador College. I use them sometimes afterward, but the longer you read the Bible, the longer you are in the church, the more often you find that what is in the commentary you could have figured out yourself, and the very thing you were looking for is what's missing.

Nevertheless, there are certain kinds of commentaries. Now in this case, the book of Esther is one of the simpler books of the Bible, but it is also one that is especially enhanced for the simple reason that its time setting in the Persian period is near enough that we have contemporary literature in part, as well as the possibility of literature that can provide further meaning to names, to words that might have been obscure, as well as of course any possible archaeological evidence because we have city's palace's name that have been discovered and excavated.

The normal place to start reading in a book, as you know, is the beginning, and on that basis we will turn to the last chapter. That way we'll better understand the beginning. This is one of the things you will all learn, or should learn, if you go to college, that it sometimes pays to look at the end of the book. And if you like the conclusion, you may find it worth buying or reading.

What questions the man asks at the beginning may be very interesting. The conclusions he comes to at the end may have made the work fruitless. So let us look at the clothes, because here is a very interesting way of approaching the book.

Now King Xerxes, and I will read this translation, and you should follow in others. Now King Xerxes, and I won't give any comment here as to why the name is Xerxes, but that is certainly the correct modern name, modern usage, because the king has oerues is without any question Xerxes.

Now King Xerxes leveled taxes, very modern thought, on both the mainland, that's Asia proper, and the islands, many of which were of course settled by the Greeks. But as for all the achievements in the might of King Xerxes, as well as for an exact account of the influence of Mordecai, whom the king had promoted, is not all this recorded in the annals of the kings of media and Persia. And in this copy it is very clearly stated, annals of the kings of media and Persia is an italics. That means it is the title of an official record or document that we would call the form of annals. For Mordecai the Jew right next to King Xerxes and was influential among the Jews and acceptable to the mass of his own countrymen. Now when it says acceptable to the mass of his own countrymen, you can always guess that there were a few jealous souls.

He sought the best interests of his people and was concerned for the welfare of his kinsmen.

Why I wanted to read this, which is really the conclusion of the book, is that it sets the tone and character. For there are people who have assumed Esther was, let's say, the story of the Thousand and Second Night. If you know the Arabian traditions of the Thousand and One, this was merely another one. The Jewish tradition would indicate clearly that the record could have been verified. That is, it is written with an appeal to further documentation if you would like to know the rest of the story, which need not have been part of scripture, but might have been informative. And so the implication is from the last chapter that we should see in this work, not a story, not a tale, but a documentation of a series of very significant events that led to the delivery of the Jewish nation from an enemy that sought in the days of Xerxes to destroy them. With this in mind and this kind of background, I'd like to read a little bit of the introduction or spots from the introduction here.

First of all, you might like to know what the first Protestant thought about the book of Esther.

His name is Martin. You know Brother Martin? I mean Martin Luther. He voiced his sentiments when he said, I could wish that the book of Esther did not exist at all for a Judah eyes is too greatly and has much pagan impropriety. I thought you should know what the Protestants first thought of this book. It gives you an idea of why Protestants since have attacked the Bible as they have, because Protestantism developed from the mind of a man who did not see in James anything more than the book of straw or in Esther too much Judahizing. It will give you an idea of why Protestants approach the Bible as they do. I will flip through a few comments here.

There are additions of course in the Latin Vulgate, the Septuagint in the Greek, or let's say the Catholic Bibles in English, additions to the Greek Bible. Sorry, that's true, but to the book of Esther.

The remarkable thing of course is that all of these additions give clear evidence of fitting into the Greek translation and in fact basically originating in Greek rather than being translations from the Hebrew. So we are not concerned because even scholars themselves are aware that these additions don't rank with Scripture. In the Catholic Bible Esther is a canonical book and the additions to Esther are really deuterocanonical. That is they admittedly don't have quite the same rank. They were derived from the Greeks who wanted to include Mordecai's prayer, who wanted to include Esther's prayer as if that would have been recorded or as if either of them might have remembered the words, but there are people who like to embellish. The question of the authority of Esther or as a book of canon was without any questions settled when in the 1890s the Jewish Council of Jamnia clearly pronounced Esther among other books a part of Scripture. Now it was not that the Bible for the first time in Hebrew was declared canonical, but this council was held at a time when the question really was should any other works either Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek that had been circulating in the Jewish sectarian community meaning the churches of God be a part of Scripture. And the New Testament was at that council rejected by the Jewish nation, but at the same time they did clearly put their approval on that which had been written in Hebrew and or Aramaic prior to the time of Herod. You know we're going back to what we would call the Old Testament period. Studies on the process of canonization says one of the notes here have confirmed the observation of a scholar who has gone into this and shown that the decisions of the Pharisee, that is the Phariseic school at Jamnia, was unofficial and only gradually became accepted throughout Judaism. Now I have said that indeed it pronounced it canonical. What we are saying is that there were people in the Jewish community that did not recognize the Pharisees as having authority. Now I can show you in Matthew 23 1 Jesus said the scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses seat. The Sadducees didn't agree and there were others who didn't agree, but Jesus recognized that the decisions they made were official and right. And even though it was regarded by many in the Jewish community as unofficial, Jesus himself puts his approval on such a decision because he said they sat in Moses seat and had authority to make a decision with respect to the Bible that had been committed to them. The New Testament had not been committed to them and their decision on that has no bearing because they had refused its speaker in the first place and were responsible for his death. But in any case it is interesting that the Jewish nation whether they thought it was official or not in the end was forced to recognize the book of Esther as a part of Scripture. Now there were sectarians like the Essenes who have preserved copies unintentionally of course of the Bible which they buried in the caves at the area of the dead sea when the Romans of course came through the region. The one book that is not there is the book of Esther.

We do not follow the Essenes and it is very probably influence of those and others that accounts for the absence of the book among some Jews questions that arose in the eastern area of the Roman Empire among Christians about it even though most Christians even though most Christians recognized that the book of Esther was a part of the standard Old Testament. It is clearly included in

the Talmudic statements regarding the books of the Bible. There is no doubt that Josephus regarded it as canonical our commentator here says. Josephus himself regarded Esther as canonical before he certainly paraphrased it in Jewish antiquities book 11. Josephus was a priest, he was a Pharisee. Josephus names the books of the Bible in number. He says there were 22 in which case he is clearly linking two of the smaller books undoubtedly different than from the King James order but the number of 22 as we would view it is clearly indicating that Esther is a part of the whole story. But there have been those who have questioned it unwisely. Interestingly enough the whole western Christian world in North Africa and in Italy and much of Greece for instance in Cyprus and in Palestine and Syria all recognized it.

The only questions essentially arose in some areas of Asia Minor in the east.

Anyway it is interesting to see that it is possible to have a conviction on this matter that is essentially sound when you realize a man in the days of the Apostles Josephus a priest who in a sense represents the family of Aaron should have used the book in a manner that is without doubt canonical. All of the standard forms of the Jewish translations I should say the Jewish copies of the Bible in Hebrew would have it. The book of Esther is a remarkable work the like of which is found nowhere else in Scripture. I'd like you to listen to a few statements that are made because they're very interesting as a scholarly mind a religious mind looks at the book. On the face of it says Mr. Moore or Dr. Moore the story in Esther seems to be true. That's comforting.

Nothing in the book seems improbable let alone unbelievable.

The picture of the king Xerxes seems to be quite compatible with what we know of him from other literary and archaeological sources. Now he does say there are a few questions that you might find arising in the story. We'll note them from time to time. I'm moving through the pages and I open up to a map and it might be good for you to realize that Susa where the events took place was not the great palace in modern Persia at Persepolis but was really in the area of Elam ancient Elam and slightly to the northeast of Babylon just on the other side of the Tigris.

In a sense the palace of Susa where the story takes place was very near Babylon in contrast to the capital in Persia itself and it represents what we might call the center of the empire.

Susa was as far east from Sardis from Miletus in western Asia Minor as it was west from the Persian cities of Kabul and the Indus River. You know Persia at that time ruled all the way from Ethiopia to India and of course to the Greek Isles. The time setting without any question can be determined readily. We will look at the Bible itself for the information.

Just a little background on Xerxes. He was the son of Darius, Darius who gave permission to Zerubbabel of course to build and finalize the second temple and he was the son of Queen Atosah who was the daughter of Cyrus. So he was in that sense the grandson of Cyrus, the great who authorized initially the restoration of the Jewish community.

This was a remarkable family. Darius was quite upset with those who revolted at the beginning of his reign. He was a man of unusual temperament and we will see that when the story develops.

He was a devout worshipper of Ahura Mazda which has to do of course with the Zoroastrian religion the son. He did prohibit the worship of demons in his realm so he did have an unusual perspective.

He warred with the Greeks for the early part of his reign and for the last 13 spent most of his time developing the internal greatness of the realm.

Xerxes was assassinated in his bedroom by a conspiracy led by his uncle Artabanus and his grandson and he was buried in a magnificent royal sepulcher in Persia near the major capital.

Now one thing our author brings out that should be of interest to you.

Xerxes had a winter palace at Susan. You obviously wouldn't go there for the summer.

Many kings have a summer palace in the mountains and a winter palace in the valley that way they have a more even temperature. The author of Esther shows awareness of certain features of the Persian government such as the seven princely advisors chapter one verse 14 the efficient postal system which of course you will recognize in chapters three and eight. He is also familiar with certain practices of the Persian court life including doing obeisance to the king's high officials which Mordecai didn't do and the recording and rewarding of the king's benefactors. The author is aware of various details and Persian customs. Among them hanging is a form of capital punishment, the observation of lucky days, royal horses with crowns chapter six verse eight, eating while reclined on couches chapter seven verse eight and the headpiece known as the turban chapter eight verse 15. Some of these things are lost in the King James version. You'd think they were wearing Henry the Eighth's crown in that day instead of turbans which they did wear.

And finally the author uses a number of Persian nouns including a number that I won't read to you but a clear recognition of the impact of the Persian language and what they now recognize and which they have for a long time even those who thought that Esther was written in the second century BC or later. There is no use anywhere in the whole of the book of Esther of any word derived from Greek which clearly indicates that the book of Esther was written before the time of Alexander the Great and in reality goes back to the Persian period. The author here, the translator points up it has been overlooked, has simply been neglected because people didn't want the book to be written basically in the period when it was written. There's no doubt that most of the personal names found in the book are of Iranian origin. Now the story, and you grant of course here that the man takes an ambivalent view, he says the story does have some very improbable things. A festival lasting 180 days. Now we're going to look at this and see whether it was so improbable but I want you to remember that the tenth chapter said you could verify it if you wanted to check the records. And then of course there's Vashti's refusal to obey the king's command. Now from the point of view of the author no queen would do this. I don't think the author was very observant of the contemporary world. The king's ridiculous letter ordering all men throughout the empire to be masters in their own homes. I will not comment on that ridiculous statement. The appointment of non-Persians to the all-important post of prime minister which Mordecai held. The letters sent out in all languages of the empire instead of Aramaic, the official language. Maybe if you understood in the first place that Heyman intended everybody to hear in his own language then there wouldn't be such a problem. If the king had done it, it might only have been an Aramaic. And then there is the king's permission for an entire people within his empire to wipe out their possessions, to be wiped out, sorry, and their possessions plundered. That's his permission to Heyman in the first place. It's thought to be improbable. But when we see what Hitler did or intended to do in the Second World War it is not improbable that there are men who do try to extirpate other people. If you know what happened in the Soviet Union to some of the minority peoples in the Caucasus you would understand after the Second World War that there are people who do intend to wipe others off the face of the earth. And then there is the king's sanction of fighting everywhere even within the palace complex itself to get rid of the king's, the Jew's enemies. Now though improbable, he says of these things, these may of course still have been true, which is the same as saying he doesn't know one way or another.

That there is really no evidence because we don't have those annals at this moment to verify or to disprove. But at least I think it's good for you to know that it is possible to have a man who was chosen in the scholarly world to make a very good translation, a very respectable presentation of this book, who can still admit that though these things seem most improbable, they still could be true. Now the question is, do you rely on your own judgment, your own authority, or whom do you rely on for making decisions in matters like this? Now there are some discrepancies or contradictions. For instance, there are 127 provinces in the empire in contrast to what Herodotus says that there were 20 satrapies. The question of course immediately is, which our author will show later, that Herodotus was not describing provinces. He was describing an area that is called a satrap. Then there is Esther's arrival at the court of Susa in 480 BC. That is chapter 2 verse 16, a time when according to Herodotus Xerxes would still have been a way fighting in Greece. Now we want to check to see whether this man interpreted Esther correctly. Other contradictions are of a more serious nature. According to the verses here in chapter 2 and 3, Esther was queen between the seventh and twelfth years of Xerxes's reign.

But according to Herodotus, Amestris was queen. Moreover, according to Herodotus, Persian queens had to come from one of seven noble Persian families, the custom which would have automatically ruled out an insignificant Jewess. But we'll look at the answers to that too.

It's good for you to know how these people think and to what extent they are only thinking.

Josephus knew the festival of Purim, which is to say that he must also have, of course, know the book of Esther. There have been many questions as to what the word Pur means, but it has been clearly established that the Assyrian Puru, a stone or a lot, is a proper meaning. Then there is the Babylonian Puru that now has been confirmed to mean lot and secondarily fate. The form Purim is a Hebrewized form of a Babylonian word.

So there is no basic question as to the usage of such terms. The festival was named after the festival, after the lots that were cast. Now, we don't use lots today. It's like putting, let's say, little strips of paper or maybe something of another form like stones in a basket or a hat and, you know, pulling out blindly to find which one has been approved or what should the answer be.

That's a rather past custom, although on occasion there are cultures that use it and within our society, I suppose, it is not done uncommonly in lodges. There have been questions as to whether the book of Esther was invented to justify the Jews adopting a pagan festival, but there's no basis for it that can be established. You see, they think this way because they know Christians have justified Easter and Christmas, and they make even a note to that effect. And they say, well, if we, you know, can tolerate Christmas, we see no reason why the Jews might not have had liberty to Judahize a pagan festival. Then there is, of course, the problem that the story of Vashti seems more like fiction than fact, so much like a thousand and one night tales. But on the other hand, maybe the thousand and one nights were based on a lot of experience in the desert world.

Significant for purposes of dating in the book of Esther is the fact that the book of chronicles contains no Greek words and also has a style of Hebrew so very similar to Esther. And chronicles without a doubt in Jewish tradition is attributed to Ezra. Ezra was essentially a contemporary, though he comes on the scene approximately a decade and a half to two decades later.

I won't go through the more details on that, but I've already commented, I think, sufficiently.

Now we come to the story itself. And so I will read sections of it and then comment and move along as we have time. It was in the days of Xerxes. Now, a footnote tells us very clearly that the Hebrew

must be understood and without a question should be understood as the name that we know in our English language as Xerxes the king. Xerxes the first. Xerxes the great.

The Hebrew has a eras meant this man can now be sufficiently established, which of course could have been known and was known. But there are always people who doubt that we can be sure ourselves without any further question. This is the Xerxes who used to reign from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces. Now here we have an important note to the fact and there will be footnotes and then there will be the basic area of notes. And I will turn to that on occasion now because I think it important to take note. The Hebrew word translated provinces does not mean a satrap and therefore because Herodotus says there were far fewer satraps or satrapies than the book of Esther says provinces, we're simply dealing with two different things.

Despite scholarly speculation, no satisfactory explanation exists for the particular number of provinces given here. That is, we have no record one way or another. It is very probable that the provinces were essentially the varied and numerous ethnic elements in the empire that Herodotus mentions, but the satrapies were the areas of government. So we have not here a contradiction, but in fact very probably if we were to think it through an amplification of information found nowhere else in the Persian or Greek realm. Now there is a problem with the first words in this book. Literally it says, and it came to pass. Now the problem is that this introduction is used for such books as Joshua, Judges in 1st and 2nd Samuel and all of those are historic books. Therefore we're frustrated by the fact that the book of Esther claims to be historic.

That's the problem you see they first deal with, but we are relieved to know that the book of Jonah starts this way too, and you know that's a story and therefore we really should translate it once upon a time. I'm glad he translated it much more like it was in the days of Xerxes, not once upon a time. But you see these are the way these men look at a book like this.

And when you look at other places in the Bible you realize that the intent is clearly to establish a factual background. At that time when King Xerxes sat on his royal throne in the Acropolis of Susa, and the translation Acropolis is a modern way, it has the sense of the fortified palace area. He gave a banquet in the third year of his reign for all his officials and courtiers. I'm going to read his translation.

The officers of the army of Persia and media, the nobles and the rulers of the province who were present, and displayed the great wealth of his empire and the glorious splendor of his majesty for many days in parentheses for half a year. Now of course the Bible says it was essentially six months or 180 days. Now here's the problem. It's not a problem but I'll state the problem.

There were his officials, his courtiers, the officials of the army, the nobles and the rulers.

Now for practical purposes there's no question you could easily have taken care of their needs in far less than 180 days. So when it says the officials of the army, the nobles and all of these, there's no reason to think it should have taken that long. But let us look to see what the Hebrew says. Now I will turn to the Hebrew and then I will show you what he has done and what he's taken for granted. In verse three he gave a banquet in the third year of his reign for all his officials and courtiers. You don't have to have that very long. That is to all his princes and his servants. Then our translator taking from the Septuagint says, the officers of the army of Persia and media. Now you know they're not that many officers and if all the king was doing was giving a banquet to the officers there was no reason for the 180 days. That's why he says that makes so much nonsense too long a time. But now listen to the Hebrew. It was in the third year he made a feast to all his princes and his servants. The army of

Persia and media, not the officers of the army, but the army itself, the nobles, the princes of the provinces being before him.

This clearly indicates that we should understand the duration of time because the king threw a banquet and wanted the officers, the princes, the nobles and in fact the entire army to see his palace and he had them go through increment by increment over a six month time. Now they say the Hebrew couldn't be right because it says army and not the officers and they just assume that has to be there because they can't imagine the king doing something like this. But if indeed the king is showing his palace and he was want to show a lot of his things he was rather ostentatious.

Then the translation of army without officers, which doesn't exist in the Hebrew and the 180 days or four score days as this translation is, is not incompatible. That is it is reasonable because when you have an army like this and have them entertained and come through and see the palace knowing the size of those armies six months is not unreasonable and these would probably without doubt be the area of autumn through winter that is somewhere October, November, December, January, February, March. That's the cool half of the year and so he displayed this great wealth.

Now when it was all over the king gave a week-long party for all the men staying in the acropolis of Susan for both the important and unimportant alike who really had spent their time helping him throw this lengthy occasion. The courtyard was decorated with white and violet cotton curtains which were fastened by linen and purple cords to silver rings and marble columns and couches of gold and silver were on a mosaic pavement of porphyry marble mother of pearl and colored stones and drinks were served in gold goblets not any too alike and there was a plenty of royal wine as befitted a king and the drinking of course was according to law you drank when the king drank except that no one was constrained as far as the quantity he should take for the king had ordered all the palace waiters to serve each guest as he wished you see the gentile nation started with the kingdom of gold then there was the kingdom of silver then there was the kingdom of bronze and then iron and then iron and clay and we're in the world of clay there's quite a difference here queen Vashti too gave a party for the women in the royal house of king Xerxes now our story here just by way of setting it says that this was in the third year and this would be in the period of time uh and we should verify it and look it up i like to tell you how to find things like this this happens to be the Babylonian chronology 626 bc to ad 75 and i'll flip to the reign of Xerxes and here we have in this remarkable work done by uh Parker and duberstein the reign of Xerxes year one of his reign began with the sixth of april 485 so the third year would be the year 483 to 482 bc uh our bookstore could get this for you this gives you in fact the Babylonian calendar month by month showing all the 13 months as they have been found that is every time a year had 13 months you might be interested in the fact that it goes through the cellucid period it even comes for instance to ad 31 and if you look at ad 31 you will discover uh that the month of nissan starts on uh april 12th and the 14th would therefore be a wednesday the 25th the seventh day adventists would like it to be one month earlier i'm pleased to say the Babylonians knew better so we'll now move along i won't tell you the story except that bashti did not obey her husband's the royal command and you remember the rest of it the king was quite displeased and it was decided that he should write a decree uh which is described in these terms if it please the king let such and such be written then when the king's decree which he has proclaimed is heard throughout the realm all women regardless of their statu status shall show proper respect to their husbands that's why it was the kingdom of silver as distinct from clay today we have clay brains making decisions in society i will now move along having been upset by this modern society on that point sometime later after the king had put bashti away his anger was subsided and he remembered bashti that is he recall what a nice woman she was but he couldn't reverse his decision and when he perhaps commented about missing her the king's pages said let beautiful young virgins be selected

for the king now in that day it didn't seem to be a problem and let the king appoint commissioners in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather together every beautiful young virgin to the acropolis of susan to the harem under the authority of hey guy the king's unit who is in charge of the women and let him give them their beauty treatment now that does sound modern then let the girl who most pleases the king be queen in place of bashti now in the first place let us say so we don't forget it because i may not have time to go back herodotus wrote essentially a quarter to a half century later he lived in the days of the successor what herodotus may record i regard with respect herodotus said i am bound to report and record what i have heard but that does not mean that i believe everything that i report in any case it does not seem improbable that what he reported of the queen who was another woman and not bashti is not improbable when you realize that solomon had 700 queens modern scholars simply try to make arguments and issues where none need exist kings such as this who had harems had numerous queens whether certain queens had to come from the seven noble families as herodotus says is irrelevant for the simple reason that in a harem there were far more than just the daughters of those families in this case ester replaced bashti ester didn't replace some other woman that's what ester replaced bashti ester didn't replace some other woman that's what the bible says and there's no reason to assume there was only one queen when the term itself is equivalent to the wife of a king and a king who had more than one wife had more than one queen be that as it may the advice was follow now there wasn't the acropolis of susa a jew whose name was mordecai he was the son ultimately of kish a benjamite and here of course is a problem who had been carried away from jerusalem with the exiles who had been deported with jack oniah king of juda that is johiah hin when nebuchadnezzar the king of bablon had taken them into exile the question then is was mordecai really this old very likely if this exile which occurred in 597 is the case then we simply have an indication that he was an infant at the time the hebrew has who had been carried away and it most certainly must refer to as they think mordecai but in reality we simply cannot be sure we know it does not refer to kish because that would be going back you see to kish who was the ancestor of sol so this goes back to that royal line but whether mordecai was an infant and now a very old man or whether it is in reference to one of his immediate ancestors we simply cannot determine from the text but the implication just grammatically would imply it was mordecai himself now he had adopted his cousin who that uh meant that it that she was the daughter of a relative of his his cousin hadassah that word means myrtle in hebrew and that's the one we know as ester which is the persian name or star since she had neither mother or father so the implication is that if her mother or father died that probably her mother was already rather older and hadassah was the youngest child and it is very possible of course that even her parents were younger than mordecai but in any case she was still a girl and a virgin that is a young woman she was shapely and had a beautiful face now her father and mother had died and mordecai had adopted her it's just possible that mordecai was an old old man but one of those unusually able surviving old men that we sometimes read of in the business world who go to work at 92 go to work at 94 and i recently was reading the story of a man who goes to work and runs his business at 99 later on when the king's edict was promulgated and when many young girls were brought to the acropolis of susan ester was also taken to the palace now we won't go into all of these details here the girl pleased her superior and gained his support so that he promptly gave her her beauty treatment and her delicacies and he provided her with the seven special maids from the palace and transferred her and her maids to the best quarters of the harem ester had not said anything about her origins because mordecai had forbidden her to do so she was of the house of benjamin therefore if there was the jewish look that heyman and others saw in the house of juda he simply didn't spot it in ester and didn't guess the story but mordecai used to walk about in front of the court of the harem so as to find out about ester's well-being and progress and you know of course that she did please the king after 12 months treatment with oil of myrrh and perfumes and cosmetics for women in whatever you know seemed

necessary why her superior provided now it's very interesting how the story develops here ester had charmed all who saw her the end of verse 15 so when ester was taken to king xerxes to his royal apartment that is in the 10th month which is tiber in the seventh year of his reign the king loved ester more than all his other wives and more than all the other girls she won his favor in devotion so that he placed the royal turban on her head and made her queen in place of vashti and now we will look at the jewish translation just so we have the story here in verse 16 of chapter 2 so ester was taken to the king ohazu iris into his house royal in the 10th month which is the month tiber in the seventh year of his reign now the seventh year of his reign would be 479 to 478 so we'll just look at that here so we get the picture clear and see if there was any need of a contradiction as our author said that that he should have been fighting the greeks now if we are dealing with the month tiber this is clearly defined as the 10th month and so we look at the story the 10th month along the way would have begun in december 22 in 479 bc in december 22 and if it is in the 10th month then in all likelihood we would say it is somewhere at the end of december or in january and if it is in january it is 478 in any case the battle with the greeks did not take place so late in the year 479 and the implication is that one of the earliest things the king did after the battle was to return and to find a replacement for queen vashti so the fact that it is the 10th month and that's the end of december or in january would seem to provide absolutely no contradiction it just is an issue that was made needlessly it fits perfectly with the story that the king himself had returned in his seventh year following the debacle when he attempted to subdue the greeks in the greek isles but failed we will now proceed with a few comments here mordecai it's a good Babylonian name mordecai is the hebraized form of marduka which is ultimately derived from marduk but that's the name that he was given by the persians who adopted many of these Babylonian names then it points up that hadasha clearly is defined as myrtle in the jewish literature the targums without any question nor does our author think the problem he first introduced that this was a jewish woman presents a difficulty there is of course no great difficulty in believing that a jewish girl could be part of a persian king's harem when it came to foreign wives kings could be quite broad minded i would remind you however that he married her before he knew who she was and as far as he knew she was persian even if she didn't descend from any of the seven noble families so in a sense many of these arguments are irrelevant i did like his argument though that she apparently didn't observe all the laws of kosher then her jewishness would have been perceived the implication is she did eat her meat and drank her milk at the same time which is what the church of god does rather than the jewish custom as you know and i think that's an important point i want to read just a note here in verse 14 of the second chapter just to give you an idea of something you might spot on occasion she went each one whom xerxes checked out went in in the evening and in the next morning she returned to the second harem to the custody of shashkas now apparently the king had in fact a harem in the following structure here is in so many other places it is a question of how best to translate it the hebrew would imply the second harem but in what sense you see is the question the reading adopted here understands the second harem to mean either a second group of women that is the concubines or a separate wing in the harem complex this interpretation is all the more plausible because the second harem was under someone else's supervision than the one who actually supervised ester first so it probably was in fact both a second group of women that is certain women went into the second harem and it was another wing of his palace and they perhaps would have played the role of concubines rather than having the royal title as ultimately was bestowed on some who remained in the other wing of the palace god did not forbid god did not forbid polygamy he says clearly that any man who has more than one wife will love one and not the other in the same way but in a world that slaughtered tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of men god permitted polygamy as a better solution than prostitution therefore men who were able and financial took care of women who simply could never have had husbands and would have had to enter into some kind of slavery otherwise you read the

story of the battles they were wars of attrition and that's one of the fundamental reasons why polygamy even existed it makes no sense in a society where there is essentially an even population there was a plot against the king this is in chapter two versus 19 to 23 it was discovered by mordecai mordecai reveals it to ester ester told the king it was investigated verse 23 its existence confirmed the two conspirators were hanged on the gallows and the whole affair was recorded in the daily record in the king's presence that's a nice effective modern translation we don't have any of these records whether some of them were buried with the kings like copies of the bible might have been buried with the kings of juda remains to be seen sometime later on king xerxes promoted heyman chapter three the son of hamadath of the agagite that is he descended from the amalekites advancing him and making him the prime minister so all the king's servants at the king's gate used to bow down and prostrate themselves for that is what the king had commanded to be done to him the mordecai however would never bow down and prostrate himself so the king's servant at the king's gate said to mordecai why do you disobey the king's command now prostration is quite different from what Mr Armstrong said if you kneel out of respect on one knee and when the supreme patriarch of buddhism came to the campus the monk stood with him other ties knelt with two knees and i knelt on one knee as the picture shows that is still the permissible custom of the church of god even though there were a few critics just finally when they had spoken to him day after day and he had not listened to them then they informed heyman in order to see whether mordecai's conduct would be tolerated for he had confided in them that he was a jew and that wasn't permitted that is his religion simply wouldn't allow him to prostrate himself which is a form of worship when heyman had seen for himself that mordecai did not bow down or prostrate himself he was furious but he hated to kill just mordecai for they had told him who mordecai's people were and so heyman sought to wipe out all the jews throughout the whole kingdom of xerxes along with mordecai now is it reasonable i cite world war two is a simple illustration go ask some of the people who lived in the caucuses in the days of stalin whether such a thing is possible in the first month which is the month nissan of the 12th year of xerxes the lot was cast in heyman's present presence literally it says and very nicely here the poor that is the lot pur was cast in heyman's presence to determine the day of the month now we'll read the seventh verse of chapter three from the jewish translation in the first month which is the month nissan in the 12th year of king ahazuerus they cast poor that is the lot before heyman from day to day and from month to month to the 12th month which is the month adar and in that way it would enable them to determine what month and what day of the month you see why did they have to cast from month to month to the 12th month because in the end it was the 12th month which was the one when the first month came down when the second month came down there was no indication they should choose it not until the 12th month came down did the answer come up yes this is the month and then in that month they waited and from day to day to day and when it came to the 13th day of the 12th month it was decided that this was the month and this was the day that it should occur but of course it didn't occur that year they simply think that the jewish translation is incorrect i'm sorry the jewish original the hebrew original and they have rendered it differently here they think it's some mistake but when you know what a lot is you realize that if it's going to fall in the 12th month that he cast a lot for each month and to see in that month whether that was the month that should be chosen there's nothing wrong with the jewish translation it's just the way people think of the problem and so we read heyman went to xerxes verse eight now there is a certain people scattered yet unassimilated now look at these arguments we won't read very much of the book but i just want to hit the highlights there is a people yet unassimilated among peoples throughout the province of your kingdom whose statutes are different from every other people now others may be different but they all get along with each other and they tolerate each other's customs and they don't raise waves but there is a people that thinks itself superior that's unassimilated that that was his argument who hold views different in an opposition to

others they don't observe even the king's statutes therefore it is not appropriate for the king to tolerate them now if it please the king let it be recorded that they be destroyed now the implication is the king may have known more about jews and heyman was taking no chances so he decided not to tip his hand about who they were and i will pay ten thousand silver talents to the proper officials to deposit in the king's treasury just so we could do this to safeguard your realm and the king was very impressed with heyman he had been very successful in handling his office so he took off his signet ring from off his hand and gave it to heyman the enemy of the jews well it's your money said the king to heyman do what you like with the people now we talk about dictators this man was far from a dictator he was influenced first by heyman and then by vashti or as the commentator said here the interesting thing is heyman had a wife sorry the king xerxes had a wife who first wouldn't obey him and then he exchanged her for ester and he was overpowered by her so he was easily influenced by others and he wasn't even that interested in the money he said look it's your money heyman do what you like with the people you're really handling so much of the office here and doing so well so the king's secretaries were summoned on the 13th day of the first month that's one year later they thought it was just right you see to do it on the 13th day so everything they wanted to do was the 13th it was very lucky and the edict was written exactly as heyman had dictated to the king satraps the governors of each of every province so here we discover that governors were over the province and the satraps were over the satrapes they were not the same divisions and the officials of every people it is written to each province in its own script to each people in its own language in the name of king xerxes and it was sealed with a royal signet ring the dispatchers were sent out by couriers to all the king's provinces to wipe out slaughter annihilate all the jews men and boys women and children in a single day on the 13th day of the 12th month which is the month adar now when you see of course that this had occurred in the 12th year then these events were to take place in which year the 13th it was to be the 13th year of the king the 12th month and the 13th day now of course we might take note i don't know where the 13th came from in the roman world or the modern world but it looks like at least from a biblical point of view if you want to find origins of things that what was once a lucky day or so heyman thought turned out to be very unlucky the contents of the documents were to be promulgated in each province published to all peoples to be ready for that day and they rushed throughout the realm then the king and heyman sat down to drink the king seems to have loved to drink the persians had a rule you made a decision when you were drunk and afterward when you were not drunk if you came to the same conclusion they knew it was right that is herodotus's evaluation and it fits very well here in the picture we'll move along mordecai learned of everything that had been done he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes he went out into the midst of the city and wailed bitterly because he was a jew and they knew it and then he came as far as the king's gate for no one in sackcloth was allowed to enter the king's gate and in every province where the king's command was heard there was loud mourning among the jews with fasting and weeping and wailing most of them were lying in sackcloth and ashes you know it is unfortunate that that didn't happen in 1933 if the jewish communities in europe had fasted and wept and wailed and laid in sackcloth and ashes lay in sackcloth and ashes one would have to have concluded that hitler would never have come to 1939 the reason the jews escaped in the days of xerxes because they really sought God these were the good things the bad things were all removed you remember Jeremiah's parable when esters maids and eunuchs came and told her the queen was quite shocked and she sent clothing for mordecai to wear so that he could take off his sackcloth but he would not accept it so esters summoned hatac one of the royal eunuchs whom the king had appointed to wait on her and ordered him to go to mordecai to learn the full particulars of this behavior so hatac went out and of course the queen herself learned and finally it was agreed that mordecai and all the jews and queen esters should fast go and gather all the jews now in susan and fast for me said the queen don't eat or drink for three days either day or night and i and my

maids will fast as you do this is verse 15 of chapter 4 in this condition while fasting i'll go to the king even though it's against the law to go without being summoned and if i perish i perish mordecai mordecai then left and carried out all esters instructions now they were to fast for three days and three nights there are people who take this verse to show that jesus couldn't have been crucified on wednesday and would not have risen on saturday evening because three days and three nights don't mean three days and three nights before we read as the next chapter opens up and so it was that on the third day ester put on her royal robe and they say that the third day here uh can't mean after three days and i agree it says very plainly listen carefully what it says we're going to fast three days day and night and the interesting thing it says in this condition of fasting so it was on the third day of the fast this has nothing to do with after three days but that's just the way people study these things on the third day while the fast was continuing ester put on her royal robes stepped in the inner court of the palace opposite the royal apartment the king was seated on his throne in the throne room facing the building's entrance finally when the king noticed queen ester standing in the court she won his favor and the king extended to ester the golden scepter that he was holding then ester came up and touched the tip of the scepter the king then said what do you want now she was undoubtedly a remarkable woman and she dressed to attract the attention of the king and she of course had the presence of god's spirit now instead of giving an answer right away when the king said look i could even divide the realm you're you're so beautiful uh you take half and i'll keep the other half i don't understand kings but on the other hand that's rather like california law i must admit if it pleased the king said ester let the king come with heyman today to a dinner and that was apparently that evening the fast would have been over that i have prepared for him bring heyman right away said the king so that we may do as ester wants i take it he'd like not only to drink but to eat now you know the rest of the story we're drawing to a conclusion and uh they had a wonderful occasion but she didn't reveal what she wished and they had another occasion but before the other occasion occurred the king couldn't sleep at night chapter six verse one and not being able to sleep he wondered if something had been overlooked in his realm and so he demanded that the records be read to see if there was a problem that he had not been managing his affairs right and then they read in the record of his reign and found the name mordecai and the king said well you know what honor has been conferred on this mordecai you realize something hadn't been done and nothing has been done for him and just as that was said there was somebody out there in the court and somebody asked for the king asked who's in the court now heyman had just entered the court so the king's servants told him well heyman is waiting in the court so the king said let him enter when heyman entered the king's question right away was what should be done for the man whom the king especially wants to honor now heyman reasoned within himself whom would the king especially want to honor besides me so his problem was heyman and then heyman said to the king all right have them bring and then you know the story he wanted even to be king because he wanted to be dressed in the original robes that the king wore at the coronation and the king didn't mind that he doesn't put on all robes again put on all robes again so he said fine put them on mordecai and the man that i choose that's heyman that's you you're going to lead him around the city to show the kind of honor i want to bestow on mordecai now you can imagine when the king had finished with this and heyman went back to his family that his stomach was rather upset and so it was of course that the king demanded that heyman come to the party on the second day and so queen ester said if i've obtained favor your majesty and if it pleased the king chapter six seven verse three let my life be granted to me at my request still didn't betray the whole story and my peoples at my petition now nobody knew not even heyman guessed you as a jewice for we have been sold i and my people for destruction for slaughter and annihilation this is the kind of hate this man has if we had just been sold as slaves and servant girls i would have kept quiet for our problem would not have been worth bothering the king who isn't exclaimed king xerxes to queen ester where is he and who has the nerve to do this that's

beautiful translation and now esther responds in like an enemy an adversary and she points the finger this wicked heyman here i don't know who ate the meal heyman was dumbfounded before the king and queen but when the king arose in anger from his wine and you can imagine he had already had too much now you can't tell the king where to stop and went out into the garden of the pavilion heyman remained behind now the king simply bolted the table and and went out to to think this thing through as to what ought to be done and of course you know ultimately that is in a few minutes heyman was executed on the very gallows he proposed to execute mordecai on that same day xerxes gave esther the entire estate of heyman chapter eight one the enemy of the jews and when mordecai was presented to the king for esther had disclosed to him their relationship the king took off the signet ring which he had recovered from heyman and presented it to mordecai and esther appointed mordecai over heyman's estate then esther spoke again to the king collapsing at his feet and crying and begging him to frustrate the evil intention of heyman because the document had gone out that the people were to destroy and annihilate the jews and now there had to be a decree issued to reverse it and i'm going to read for the moment the jewish translation chapter eight verse nine then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month now we have documentation the implication of the book of esther even though some things may be dramatically unexpected might even reach the carnal mind as if improbable the implication is that we are dealing with documentation that you can check in the records so the king's secretaries were summoned on the 23rd day of the third month is this translation which is the month sieben and the edict concerning the jews was written exactly as mordecai had dictated that they should be free to deliver themselves further that the people should offer themselves to the defense of the jews read carefully verse 11 and so on and on one day the whole of the provinces were to come to the defense of the jews and the jews themselves were to have the right to punish their enemies on the 13th day of the 12th month which is the month adar the contents of the edict were to be promulgated in each province and again it was in the languages of the people so that they might all know the jews celebrated the occasion of hearing the news that they could defend themselves and chapter 9 verse 1 on the 13th day of the 12th month this lucky day in the month adar when the king's commandment and edict were about to be enforced on that day when the enemies of the jews had hoped to destroy them the opposite happened the jews destroyed their enemies the jews had gathered in their cities throughout king xerxes province to kill those who sought their ruin no one however was successful against them since everyone feared them moreover all the provincial officers satraps governors and those who conduct the king's affairs aided the jews for they feared mordecai who was prime minister for mordecai was very influential in the royal palace and his reputation was spreading to all the provinces as the man mordecai grew more and more powerful and of course there are people who don't like jews to exercise power so the jews defeated all their enemies 500 men perished in the acropolis of susa itself so the story goes on the jews and susa had organized and they had to do defense on two days the 13th and the 14th otherwise throughout the provinces they only had to defend themselves on the 13th and then they celebrated on the next day that is why the jewish villagers living in unwall town celebrate the 14th day of the month adar on an occasion as an occasion for rejoicing and feasting for holiday making and exchanging delicacies and then of course in the next chapter we have the letter that went out authorizing that this custom should now be established and listen carefully verse 27 chapter 9 the jews agreed and made it customary for themselves their descendants and all future converts to the jewish community judaism to continue to celebrate annually without fail these days is specified in the letter on the proper dates now an interesting thing just as we close here these days of porem should never be abrogated among the jews verse 28 and that the memory of them should never die among their descendants because of this remarkable delivery that was wrought and ester fixed her esters words fixed these practices for porem in other words it had government authority as well as already the custom and the general

response of the people you know there was a time the month adar could be either the last month of the year either 29 or 30 days we're clearly told this in the town but you and i should know that today the hebrew calendar allows the month of adar only to be 29 days and the months that vary are months eight and nine right after the seventh month when the feast of tabernacles falls it didn't used to be that months eight and nine were decreed as the variable months you see a year may have 353 or 354 or 355 days so you're bound to have to have some months where you have two 29s or 29 and 30 or 230s in a row it used to be that adar could vary that was the logical end of the year you you make the change at the end of the year but when porem was decreed and when for instance as an illustration when the Passover as this year would fall on a Sabbath and the first day therefore falls on a Sunday in other words nesan or abib one falls on a Sunday and the Passover falls on a Sabbath like this year let's look at 1981 what would happen if this year the Passover the 14th of nesan would fall on a Sabbath as it does and the first of nesan falls on a Sunday if you have 29 days in adar then porem falls on a Friday there is no problem porem would fall on a Friday but suppose the Passover were to fall on a Monday two days later and you would have a situation where the first of nesan would therefore be a Tuesday and the 30th of adar were permitted and that would be a Monday then you would have possibilities you see of the month of I should say the feast of porem falling on a Sabbath there are cases where the feast of porem would fall on a Sabbath if we did not have a fixed number of days in the last month of the year which is 29 on the basis of the calendar therefore we have a decision made that we are in a sense basing on the book of ester the month of adar must have 29 days and not 30 in order to avoid a problem of having the festival of porem fall on a Sabbath you see the festival of porem was meant to be celebrated in a very special way that goes beyond the way we normally keep a Sabbath so even the calendar has been slightly adjusted when it comes to the number of days in a month in order to be sure that this festival occurs in its proper season in this year it will be a Friday next Friday and we're not here of course to ask the non-Jewish community to participate the church does not ask Jews to become uncircumcised the church does not ask Jews to neglect the requirement of the book of ester to remember that their ancestors were delivered as the account is in the book of ester and I appreciate an opportunity at a bible study to discuss this subject and to let us know of its importance from year to year much as we would convey if we were Americans in England something of the meaning of the festival of thanksgiving to other people so that we can understand some of the experiences of human beings and what in this case the Jewish community has endured I'm very grateful too that I've had the privilege of being in attendance for some years from time to time for individuals who have Jewish background and I have appreciated very much some hearing the prayers and knowing something of the customs that have occurred both at this festival as well as others such as the festival of Hanukkah or lights that commemorates the story of the deliverance of the Jews in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes but in any case you should read and I'd encourage you to read sometime during this week the book of ester and you might like to read some of the background of that book also by looking in the early chapters of Ezra by looking at the material in Haggai that precedes the story of ester it give you a feeling of some of the remarkable events that were then transpiring in the kingdom of Judah and I want to thank the girls for the beautiful work that they did and Mr. Halford and others in putting together the films I thought that was a remarkable presentation for some of our young children to do have a good night and a safe journey home and remember the prayer request